

“I Don’t Want to Have a Weird  
Relationship With You, So I’m  
Trying”: Relational Turning Points  
and Trajectories of Ex-LDS Children  
and Their Active LDS Parents

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# Purpose

- ❖ Ex-LDs individuals face a unique and often turbulent time in their relationship with their parent if the individual decides to leave the LDS Church.
- ❖ To explore this phenomena, we investigated the turning points and relational trajectories of ex-LDS children and their interactions with their active LDS parent.

# Context:

- ❧ Emerging Adults & Parent-Child Closeness (Arnett, 2000; 2007; Kretschmer, Vollebergh, & Oldehinkel, 2015)
- ❧ Family Culture (Sillars, 1995)
- ❧ Leaving the Church (Hinderaker, 2014; Hinderaker & O'Connor, 2015)
- ❧ Turning Points/Relational Mapping (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Graham, 1997)

RQ1: What turning points exist within the relationships of ex-LDS children and their active LDS parent?

RQ2: What trajectories occur in relationships of ex-LDS children and their active LDS parent?



# Participants: Inclusion Criterion

## ❖ Inclusion Criterion:

- ❖ Between the ages of 18-30
- ❖ Raised in the LDS religion
- ❖ Have at least one living parent still active in the LDS church
- ❖ At least one conversation with their parent(s) concerning their departure from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

# Participants: Demographics

- ❖ 30 participants
- ❖ On average, participants were 23 years old, but ranged in age from 18 years old to 30 years old ( $SD=3.64$ ).
- ❖ 19 identified as women, 10 identified as men, and one identified as A-gender.
- ❖ 28 participants reported as White, one participant reported as both Black/African American and White, and one participant reported as both Asian/Pacific Islander and White.

# Method:

- ❖ Retrospective Interview Technique (Baxter & Bullis, 1986)
- ❖ Turning Point Analysis (Golish, 2000)

# RQ1: Turning Points

- (1) Discussions of Values and Beliefs
- (2) Decrease in Church Participation
- (3) Moving Out
- (4) Physical Proximity
- (5) Critical Family Events
- (6) Parent Realizations
- (7) Sibling Events
- (8) Romantic Life Events
- (9) Verbal Boundary-setting
- (10) Social Life Conversations
- (11) Coming Out
- (12) Personal Value Decisions
- (13) Parent Interference
- (14) Non-verbal Events





# Turning Point: Discussions of Values and Beliefs

“They both sat down and told me to sit down like, ‘Hey so we looked through your messages.’ And I’m like, ‘Alright, this is it, I finally have to [tell them].’ I was hoping to graduate high school and move out and then be able to tell them, because I knew it would be bad if I lived at home and they found out. So they just grilled me...like really ridiculing me. They said, “Do you believe in the Mormon church anymore?” I said, “No.” [They were] really badgering me, but like being very rude...So I felt very attacked...My dad and mom were obviously very hurt, so there was a lot of hurtful things that were said.”

(Interview 13)



# Turning Point: Parent Realizations

“She didn’t say this specifically, the takeaway I got from the conversation was like, “Hey, I might not understand the exact problems you’re going through but I--I’ve been there emotionally” basically.” (Interview 9)

# Turning Point: Parent Interference

“She made the rule that I either went to church or I paid rent, or I moved out, and I couldn't move out because I didn't have a job, and I couldn't pay rent because I didn't have a job. So my only option was to go to church or be homeless and having [my] young kid, a young baby. I liked church much better than being homeless, and so I just tolerated going to church.” (Interview 17)

# RQ2: Relational Trajectories

(1) Minor Setback

(2) Reconciliation

(3) Delayed Reconciliation

(4) Reluctant Reconciliation

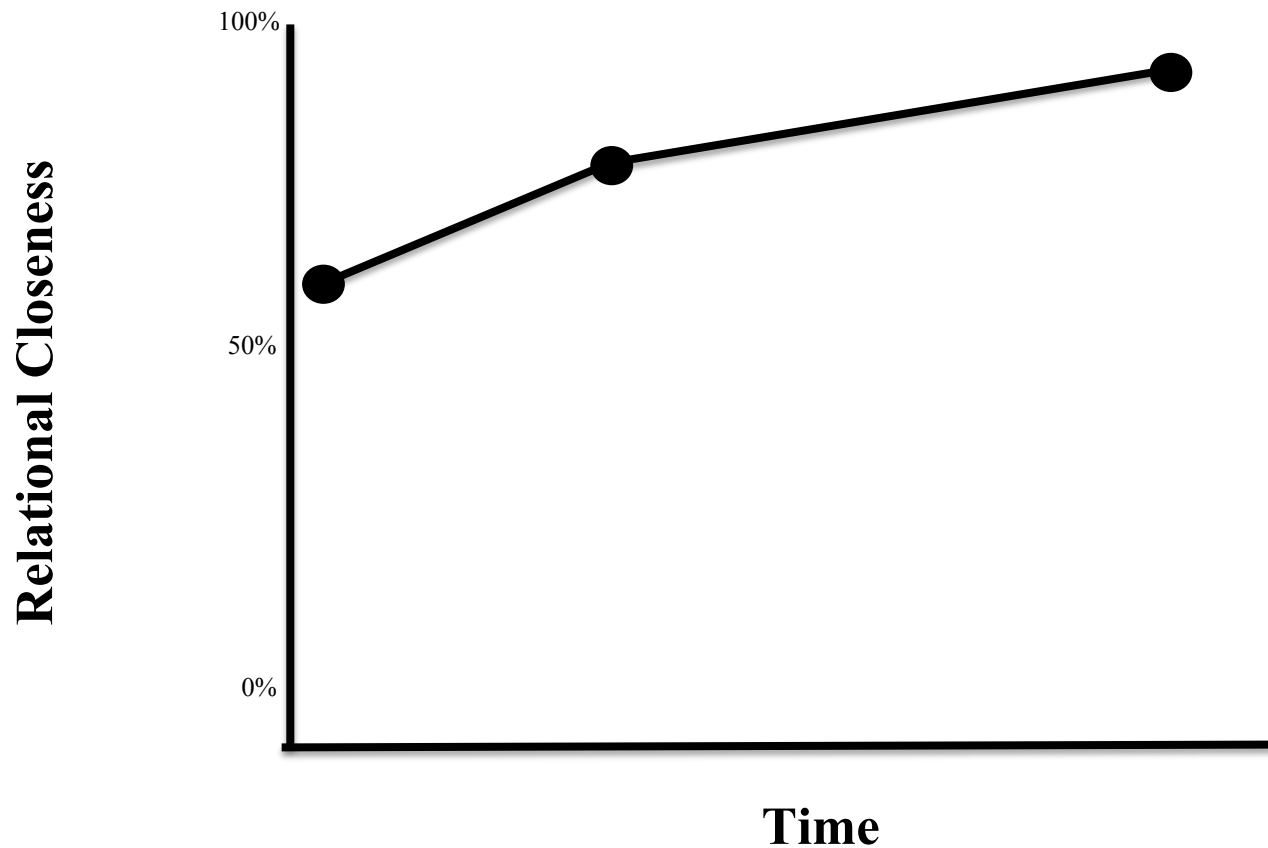
(5) Positive Turbulent

(6) Negative Turbulent

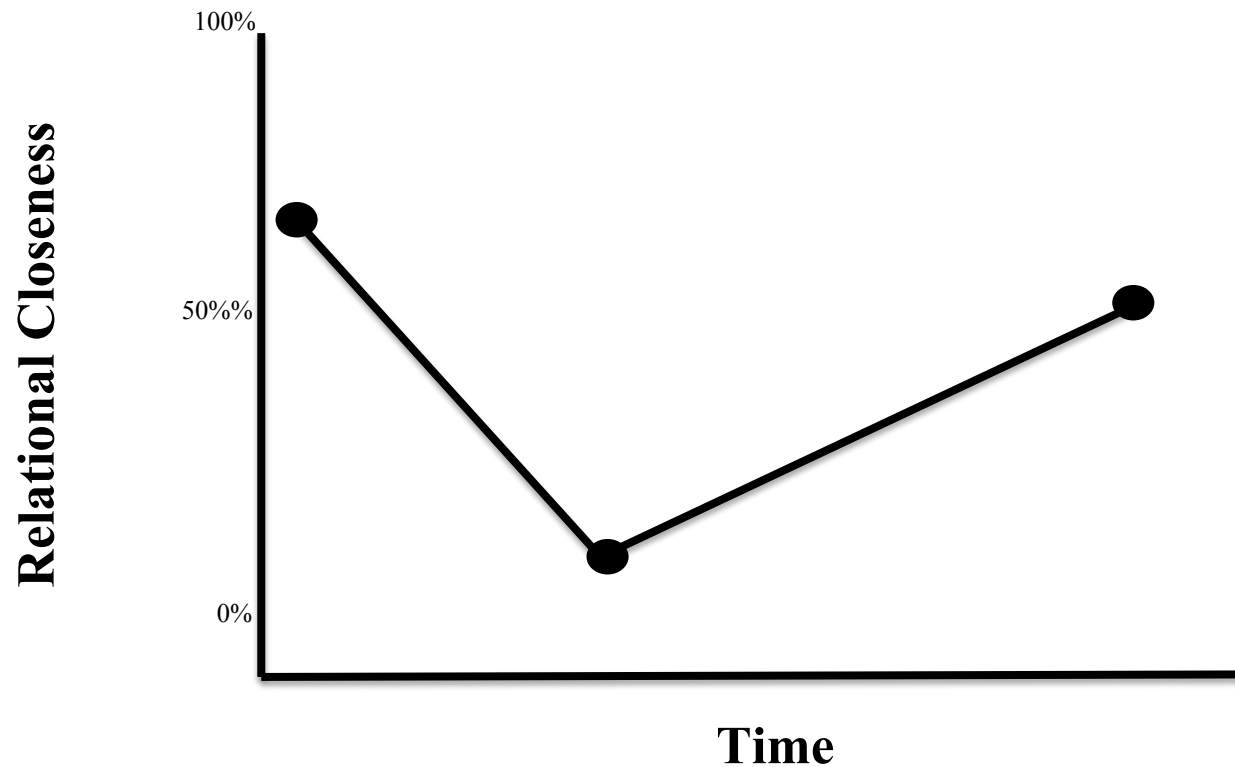
(7) Moderate Turbulent

(8) Diminishing Closeness

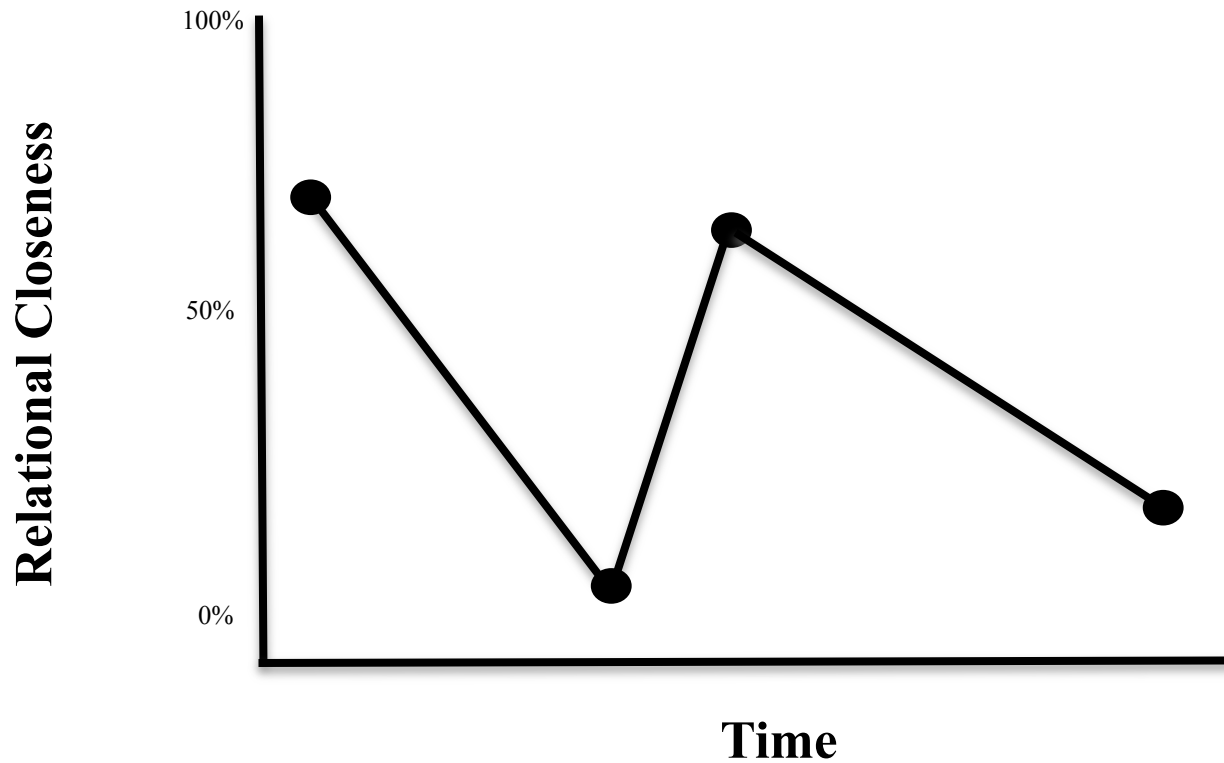
# Trajectory: Minor Setback



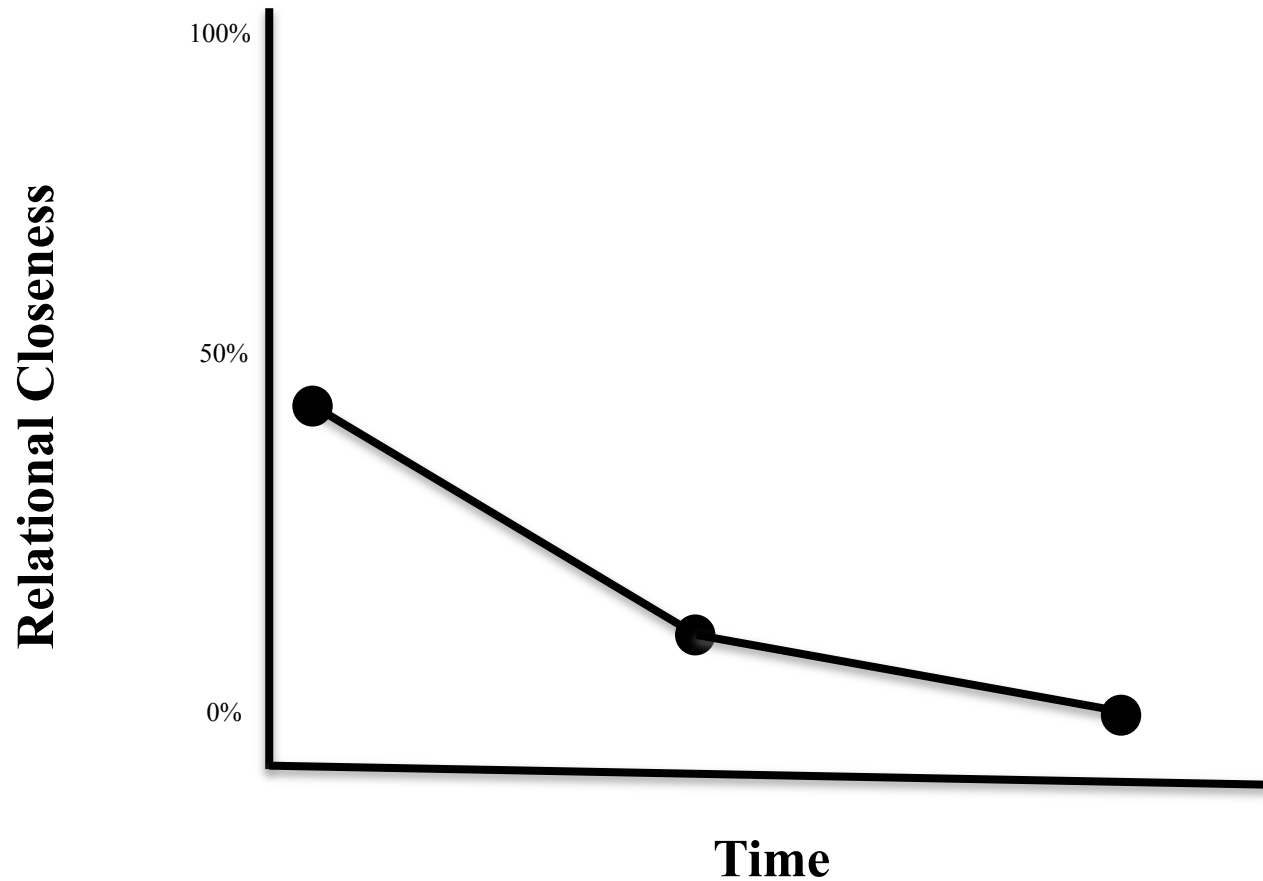
# Trajectory: Reconciliation



# Trajectory: Negative Turbulent



# Trajectory: Diminishing Closeness





# Discussion:

- ❧ Familial Boundaries and emerging adulthood
- ❧ Families with Religious Differences
- ❧ LDS Doctrine on Family

# Limitations & Future Research



- ❖ Not Dyadic
- ❖ Retrospective Accuracy
- ❖ Racial/Ethnic Homogeneity
- ❖ Investigating communication behaviors within turning points
- ❖ Other cultural exits

# Conclusion

Ex-LDS children may present a tricky dilemma to their families, where active LDS parents might feel like it becomes a decision between following church standards and doctrine by trying to reconvert their ex-LDS child or accepting their child's deviating way of life.

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